

VZCZCXYZ0022
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUCNDT #1839 2631333
ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 201333Z SEP 06
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0245
INFO RUEHJB/AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA PRIORITY 0710
RUEHFN/AMEMBASSY FREETOWN PRIORITY 0687

UNCLAS USUN NEW YORK 001839

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KPKO](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [BR](#) [SL](#)
SUBJECT: CONFERENCE ON UN PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION: NGOS
DEBATE ROLE

1. SUMMARY: On September 5, civil society think tanks, NGOs, and UN mission representatives discussed next steps for the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) during a German NGO-sponsored symposium on "Getting the Peacebuilding Commission off the Ground - How to Include Civil Society on the Ground." Participants noted that PBC and civil society interaction should center on the following areas: 1) civil society assistance in identifying gaps in assistance, particularly in areas where longer-term international aid is needed to secure a sustainable peace; 2) assisting the PBC to work with host countries on a bottom-up strategy; 3) the civil society role in rebuilding social norms that promote a lasting recovery; and 4) civil society input into the PBC's compilation of "best practices" in peacebuilding. UN Assistant Secretary-General Carolyn McAskie challenged civil society participants to organize themselves and provide focused, practical input to the PBC that will enable this fledgling institution to achieve concrete results early on.
END SUMMARY

2. The September 5 Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) sponsored symposium brought together approximately fifty NGO representatives, UN mission representatives from Commission member countries, and several staff personnel from the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). Civil society representatives from the two countries selected as the first two candidates for PBC consideration (Sierra Leone and Burundi) were invited to attend. A Sierra Leone CS member did attend, but a Burundi CS representative was not able to attend due to difficulties with timely visa issues.

3. Symposium findings and points emphasized during discussion follow:

-- The most important civil society role in PBC activities is to build a coalition and political pressure for host country identification and ownership of a longer term recovery strategy. Civil society organizations should work to ensure that a bottom-up strategy is adopted, preventing the misuse of resources by the host government.

-- Civil society's role is to work with the PBC to keep attention on longer term recovery issues "when CNN leaves."

-- Civil society can be more effective than host governments at identifying gaps in post-conflict assistance. Civil society organizations are often critical to ensuring that post-conflict programs effectively function in rural communities.

-- Civil society involvement is crucial to a potentially critical longer-term post-conflict peacebuilding activity; the rebuilding of social norms.

-- NGO participation is not always welcome or fully developed in countries where the PBC will be asked to advise. Several participants raised this as a potential problem in Burundi, one of two countries selected for evaluation in PBC country-specific meetings scheduled for October 12-13.

-- PBC terms of reference outlining how the Commission will work with NGOs and Civil society organizations lags behind many other UN institutions in opening PBC deliberations to CS input. However a PBSO representative pointed out that this ambiguity is appropriate given uncertainty about what direction the PBC will take in developing its activities. PBSO head McAskie stated that peacebuilding NGO activity is "expanding exponentially". She called on NGOs to organize themselves, and provide targeted practical input to the PBC as the PBC and its associated fund move forward with evaluating needs and programs in post-conflict countries.

BOLTON